

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

## news release

For Release on Delivery 8:00 p.m. (CDT), August 21, 1976

REMARKS OF SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR THOMAS S. KLEPPE  
BEFORE THE SOUTH DAKOTA WILDLIFE FEDERATION  
PIERRE, SOUTH DAKOTA, AUGUST 21, 1976

Some of you may have seen the story on television recently about the deer population of a state park out west. This park is an island, and the number of deer there had grown to 250 -- about five times what the forage will support.

Handouts from picnickers and the garbage they left behind provided some feed, but many deer were starving and diseased.

Officials were in a quandary.

Previous plans to thin out the herd by killing some deer had been abandoned after a public outcry.

Game managers were reluctant to take any deer off the island to another area because this might spread disease.

Bringing additional feed to the island would simply expand the deer population and compound the problem.

Now, I don't know how or whether this dilemma has been resolved.

But this story vividly illustrates several points.

First, in today's complex society we have to actively manage our resources, our mineral and our wildlife resources. We cannot just let nature take its course.

Second, we must have a balanced approach in our management. The size of a deer herd must be balanced against the forage available. And in our decision-making regarding all our natural resources we have to balance off needs against costs.

And finally, we desperately need to provide better and more complete information to the public concerning the vital decisions which must be made regarding resource development, wildlife management, and related matters which are your special concern and my official responsibility.

Management of resources does not occur in a vacuum. It occurs in what has become a highly charged atmosphere of diverse and demanding constituencies.

The Interior Department is one of the points in government where conflicting demands collide on some of the most important issues of the day. It is my responsibility to hear arguments from all quarters, to consider all points of view, and then make the tough decisions on such issues as resource development on public lands, the role of the Federal Government in wildlife management, and at least a dozen other major policy areas.

Because it is so vital to the future of our country, much of my time during my 10 months as Secretary of the Interior has been taken by energy resource management. I want to talk about that for a few minutes before turning to other matters which are of special concern here in South Dakota.

Our national energy situation is critical.

Petroleum makes up only about 17 percent of our energy resource base, but we depend upon it for 75 percent of the energy we consume. U.S. petroleum production has dropped from 9.6 million barrels per day in 1970 to about 8.1 million at the present.

In 1970 we imported 23 percent of our petroleum and paid \$3 billion for it. This year we will import more than 41 percent and pay about \$35 billion.

This expenditure of about \$100 million per day is a terrible drain on our economy. The dependence upon foreign producers puts us in grave strategic danger. In effect, each day we put our future a little more in the hands of the oil exporting governments.

We must reverse the trend of energy dependence.

President Ford has spelled out for us a comprehensive, sound policy for attaining a level of energy sufficiency which will enable us to maintain our national independence, personal freedoms and economic stability regardless of what the oil cartel should decide to do in the future.

Our immediate objective is to increase U.S. oil and gas production. The Alaskan Oil Pipeline will help in this regard, and we are seeking to expedite the construction of a natural gas delivery system from Alaska to the Lower 48.

Another major effort involves the development of outer continental shelf oil and gas. We have proceeded with the lease sales only after carefully studying the areas involved to make certain the action would be environmentally sound.

Here in the Dakotas, you are more concerned about coal.

Coal is our most abundant energy resource with several hundred years worth of reserves.

Our goal at Interior has been to devise a policy which would accelerate production from Federal lands under stringent requirements for environmental protection and reclamation.

Earlier this year I announced a new leasing policy for the 85 million acres of identified coal reserves on Federal land. This policy established maximum opportunity for the states and the public to have a voice in the leasing process.

As part of the program, we called for the nomination of tracts of public land which should be and which should not be offered for leasing.

About 300 nominations were received for some 1,000 tracts, including some tracts in South Dakota. Only a small number of nominations were for areas to be excluded from leasing.

This does not mean the tracts nominated will be or will not be offered for leasing. This just tells us where the demand exists for leases and where there will be objections to leasing. It is but one step in a decision process which we originally envisioned taking 18 to 24 months to complete.

Complicating the program is recently enacted coal leasing legislation which will prolong the process. The law supersedes some of our regulations, and we are now determining what revisions must be made to our procedures.

Our energy program, of course, consists of much more than mining coal and tapping outer continental shelf oil. There is a major conservation effort...an extensive research and development program for solar and other alternative sources of energy...work on development of expanded safe nuclear energy...and an emergency petroleum storage project -- just to name a few elements. Many pieces have to be put into place to make this policy effective.

I can and have talked all night about energy resources. But tonight I want to move on to make some comments about another precious natural resources -- water.

With 59 of the 67 counties in the State declared drought disaster areas, the people of South Dakota know the importance of water.

In response to the crisis, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service made lands available for haying and grazing on refuges and waterfowl production areas.

Two major considerations in permitting these activities were the need for vegetative manipulation for wildlife and the relative abundance of upland cover in a particular area. As we know, a dry year places additional stresses on wildlife, mainly due to lack of protective cover. We received 675 requests for forage removal as of August 2, 1975, and 319 permits were issued for 8,318 acres.

We are keenly aware of the concern that wildlife habitat has been unduly sacrificed. This is not the case. We have acted responsibly to help drought-stricken farmers without any significant cost to wildlife.

Here in the Dakotas we are proud of the fact that our two states are the top waterfowl producers in the contiguous 48 States.

South Dakota also is an important migrational area.

The people here enjoy hunting opportunities equalled in few other areas. Hunting is both a recreational pursuit and an integral part of the waterfowl management program.

There is growing concern among state and federal waterfowl biologists that we may be overharvesting certain populations of Canada Geese in South Dakota.

The Fish and Wildlife Service has urged the State Department of Game, Fish and Parks to assist in initiating methods of more precisely determining the harvest. Accurate information is vital to the management of migratory birds. Without adequate population data, regulations must be conservative in order to preclude overharvest.

We appreciate the support of the South Dakota Wildlife Federation in seeking to improve the data upon which such decisions are made.

For waterfowl production, there must be wetlands.

Federal and State efforts are being pursued to preserve the wetlands.

The Fish and Wildlife Service has preserved 70,000 acres in fee title and has saved 275,000 acres from draining, burning, and filling through an easement program. Congress recently extended this program through 1983. In addition, the Agriculture Department has its waterbank program.

The South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks has acquired wetlands and public shooting and game production areas. And The Nature Conservancy has purchased a 7,000 acre wetland tract in northeast South Dakota.

Despite these efforts, the 1.3 million acre wetland base in South Dakota continues to be reduced.

There remains among a great many Americans a lack of appreciation for the value of wetlands and wildlife habitat in general.

Substantial opposition surfaced this year to purchase of wildlife lands in connection with water development projects in this State.

The Bureau of Reclamation has purchased approximately 3,300 acres of wildlife land as part of the authorized 40,000 acre wildlife mitigation for the Oahe Unit Irrigation Project. Currently the Fish and Wildlife Service is reviewing the original plan in the light of new concepts for wildlife mitigation and enhancement that emphasize restoration of small tracts of natural wetland complexes rather than large areas.

We do not regard the replacement of wildlife habitat destroyed by Federal construction as a frill. It is a part of the package that goes with such projects, and the only question is how to best accomplish the objective.

Another aspect of the Oahe Project of great concern here is the proposed plan for channel modification of the James River. The Bureau of Reclamation has indicated that irrigation return flows can be accommodated effectively in the James River by any one of several methods. Alternatives currently under assessment include channel modification, creation of a green belt along the river, alternate floodway channels, and channel clearing -- or a combination of these alternatives. Once a final decision has been made, a supplemental environmental statement will be prepared. We expect this decision to be made within the next few years.

The process being followed here is an example of involving state and local authorities in the decision-making process. Governor Kneip and bureau regional director Robert McPhail formed the James River Study Team two years ago to examine the alternatives for handling irrigation return flows. This team is

comprised of five federal and seven state agency technicians who are making recommendations.

There are other issues which I would like to discuss such as other Bureau of Reclamation programs in this State and the endangered species program, but I will leave these for another time.

In closing, I want to address the fears some people have that the Federal Government is attempting to move in on the wildlife management responsibilities now administered by the states.

The Supreme Court ruling on the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act is interpreted to mean that Congress has the authority to regulate and protect wildlife on Federal public lands, state laws notwithstanding. The question is not whether Congress can delegate wildlife functions to Federal agencies but whether it should.

It is not my intent to request any legislation that would in any way provide authority for Federal regulation of wildlife species on public lands.

The states have, and I assure will continue to, set hunting, fishing, and trapping laws and regulations which apply on those lands, except as modified by Federal legislation, such as the Endangered Species Act, the Wild Horse and Burro Act, and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

Our policy relating to the responsibilities of the Interior agencies and the states was spelled out in 1970, and remains unchanged. These regulations encourage a maximum degree of cooperation between Federal and state employees who are carrying out their respective roles on Federal lands.

This division of responsibility has worked well, and I would not change it.

Where we have the authority to delegate our management responsibilities to the states, we are doing so as rapidly as possible in accordance with legislation and court rulings.

Our objective at the Interior Department is to foster the wisest possible management of our great resources in this land -- of the water, the minerals, the timber, the wildlife. We are a big Department, more than 60,000 fulltime employees, but there is no way we can do the job without a great deal of help.

We will continue working with the states in partnership to improve the management of our resources and to better serve the American people.

But in this country, the responsibility doesn't stop at the government agency -- Federal, State or local. Our government agencies for the most part simply are processors for group and individual demands.

Our nation provides a magnificent system by which every individual can become involved in an activity or activities which influence the direction of public policy.

Responsible and effective organizations such as the Wildlife Federation are one of the means by which people banding together are effective in promoting policies and public education which bring about better management of our national resources.

It is a pleasure to have had the opportunity to visit with you and participate in this awards banquet.

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INT: 6562-76